



# Salt Lake City's Gateway District—Rails to Revitalization

## Salt Lake City, UT

**R**ail lines and rail yards have been a fixture of Salt Lake City's historic Gateway District since the late 1800s. Located just three blocks west of Main Street, the 650-acre Gateway District was once home to bustling immigrant communities and thriving businesses. Although the presence of the railroad initially helped to develop the area, ultimately it became a hindrance as the district grew and the presence of three rail yards and rail lines in the streets limited accessibility. When Interstate Highway 15 was built in the 1960s on the western edge of the Gateway District, four on/off-ramps were constructed to bypass the railroad tracks. Shadowed by the off-ramps, cut off by the Interstate, and potentially contaminated by more than 100 years of rail and industrial use, the area received little public or private investment. Today, through a focused effort among the city, state transportation officials, the railroad, and federal agencies, this Brownfields Showcase Community area is being revitalized.

Showcase Communities are selected by the Brownfields National Partnership to demonstrate that through cooperation, federal, state, local, and private efforts can be concentrated around brownfields to restore these sites, stimulate economic development, and revitalize communities. Showcase Communities serve as models for broad-based cooperative efforts to support locally based initiatives. Showcases receive up to \$400,000 from EPA for both environmental assessments and to support the loan of a federal employee to the Showcase for up to three years. Showcase Communities receive additional financial and technical support from the Partnership's more than 20 federal partners, depending on the community need and program eligibility.

Despite its proximity to the city's central business district, the Gateway District might have been shuffled aside indefinitely had Salt Lake City not been selected to host the 2002 Olympic Winter Games. When the State of Utah decided to rebuild and widen Interstate 15, Salt Lake City seized this as an opportunity to revitalize the Gateway District. The city successfully negotiated with Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR), the sole provider of rail service to industries in the District, to remove its rails from the streets. The city also convinced UPRR to sell its three rail yards in the Gateway area. Amtrak, which used UPRR's lines, has moved to a new station location that will eventually be part of a 10,000-square-foot Intermodal Transit Hub. The city then turned to the state Department of Transportation to negotiate shortened on/off-ramps from

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*A brownfield in Salt Lake City's Gateway District, prior to redevelopment.*

## JUST THE FACTS:

- Using EPA Brownfields Assessment Pilot and Showcase Community funding, rail yards and several properties in the District underwent environmental assessments.
- Perception of the area's contamination proved worse than reality—conditions were good enough that redevelopment could proceed without significant cleanup.
- A private development group purchased the largest rail yard, and in November 2001 began a \$375 million mixed-use, mixed-income development effort.

***Located just blocks from Main Street, the 650-acre Gateway District was once home to bustling immigrant communities and thriving businesses. More recently, cut off by Interstate Highway 15 and potentially contaminated, the area received little public or private investment. Now, through a focused effort among the city, state transportation officials, the railroad, and federal agencies, the area is being revitalized.***

I-15, to allow traffic to flow directly into the Gateway District. In January 2002, the city selected an architectural team to begin design of the Transit Hub. This team includes a local artist, an historic planner, a landscape architect, and transportation engineers. Construction on the hub is scheduled to begin in April 2003.

Despite these successes, unknown environmental conditions in several areas of the city still stood as a barrier to planning and redevelopment. Through a Brownfields Assessment Demonstration Pilot grant from EPA, as well as Showcase Community funding, the rail yards and several properties in the District underwent environmental assessments. As expected, there was some contamination, but perception was worse than reality—conditions were good enough that redevelopment could proceed without significant cleanup. Gateway Associates, a private development group, purchased the largest rail yard, and in November 2001 began a \$375 million mixed-use, mixed-income development that incorporates the historic Union Pacific Rail Depot. Ultimately, this project will include 2.5 million square feet of space for retail, entertainment, office, and cultural facilities, including a children's museum; a public plaza; a 300-room hotel; and 500 residential units. During the winter Olympic games, 330 of these residential units were used for media housing, and more than 80 percent of the units have since been leased by tenants.

Once plans were underway, the city focused on the infrastructure improvements needed to support new development. The city purchased land needed to reconstruct the main street and build a 100-foot-wide linear park immediately west of the Union Pacific Rail Depot and former rail yard. With an estimated cost of more than \$11.2 million, the project will consist of infrastructure improvements, land acquisition, environmental assessments, and the construction of landscaped "Park Blocks." The federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) provided \$1.27 million in assistance for project construction to support the 7,300 to 10,000 new jobs expected to be created in the area. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provided \$500,000 in funding under its Economic Development Initiative to purchase land for a future phase of the project. The first phase of this project was completed in April 2002, and a ribbon cutting was attended by EPA, EDA, and HUD. The second section of park area is expected to be finished in Spring 2003. With help from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, there are also plans to restore a creek and create a greenspace corridor from the new park area to recreational space along the Jordan River to provide regional recreational connections. A preliminary study conducted for this project estimated costs at just over \$21 million.

Through the combined efforts of the city and its redevelopment agency, the railroad, EPA, other federal agencies, and private investors, there is new hope for jobs for area residents and opportunity for private investment, a cleaner environment, and a revitalized Gateway community.

## **CONTACTS:**

For more information on EPA's Showcase Communities, contact Tony Raia of OSWER's Office of Brownfields Cleanup and Redevelopment at (202) 566-2758

Or visit EPA's Brownfields Web site at:

<http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/>



*The refurbished Union Pacific Depot site in Salt Lake City.*